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P 091159Z JUL 07
FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8688
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2076
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0783
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0983
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2761
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1117
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4647
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1821
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1675
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEFHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 001626

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, DRL, INR/IAA; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR
POLAD; TREASURY FOR OASIA-JLEVINE; DEPT PASS DEPT OF LABOR
(INTERNATIONAL); DEPT PASS USDA FOR FAS;
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION; USDOC
FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [DR](#) [ASEC](#) [ELAB](#) [PGOV](#)
SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS III #28: NATIONAL WORK STOPPAGE
PROTEST MONDAY JULY 9

¶1. (U) This is the 28th cable in our series on Dominican
politics in the third year of the administration of President
Leonel Fernandez.

NATIONAL WORK STOPPAGE AND PROTEST, JULY 9

Radical neighborhood associations have called for a national
strike in the Dominican Republic on Monday, July 9. The
strike is led by leftist community organizations such as the
Foro Social Alternativo, or Alternative Social Forum. Their
most articulate spokesman is Fidel Santana, who emphasized
the groups' peaceful intentions. These groups have
coordinated to launch other smaller, localized strikes in
other parts of the country in recent months. at least two
occasions they attempted to coordinate with powerful drivers'
unions and less powerful labor unions to launch strikes in
Santo Domingo, too. Both strikes failed to take place for
various reasons.

Contacts between the authorities and the strike leaders over
the weekend failed to move either side. In a suburb of the
second city, Santiago, three men were wounded by an explosion
that appears to have occurred as they were putting together a
homemade bomb for use in the strike. Police officials
identified them as neighborhood organizers associated with
the hotbed city of Navarete, north of Santiago.

Strikers are protesting a wide range of problems that most
acutely affect working class Dominicans, such as gas prices
that have risen 57 pct over three years, the failure of
salary increases to match inflationary losses for private and
public sector employees, evictions of squatters in the
capital region, etc.

The July 9 strike is scheduled to last 24 hours. It was originally scheduled for July 10, but the organizations elected on June 23 to move it forward by a day in order to accommodate "school exams," which begin on July 10. It could have been moved in accordance with the Dominican tradition of holding strikes on Mondays, which effectively prolongs the weekend for those who heed the call to strike.

The strike has received the full support of the PRD, the main opposition party, and its presidential candidate, Miguel Vargas. The PRD is probably providing logistical and financial support, with the aim of embarrassing the Fernandez government.

The powerful three main transportation unions held an assembly at 4:00 pm on Saturday, July 7 but made no public pronouncements. Although they are not endorsing the strike, it is likely that many of their operators and vehicles will stay off the streets, avoiding any possible confrontations.

The Armed Forces and National Police said they would post additional policemen and soldiers on the streets to "guarantee order." Small groups of military were visible on street corners in Santo Domingo on Monday morning.

These threats to strike have come and gone in the past. They are often cancelled at the last minute in response to modest concessions from the government. However, unlike the situation in past strikes that were planned by labor or transportation unions, the organization that appears to be in the driver's seat this time, Foro Social Alternativo, seems more interested in scoring a political point than in winning concessions. This would also appear to be the primary

motivation for the PRD.

That said, transportation unions are still probably feeling a little gunshy after the public outcry in the wake of the last minor transportation strike, where a molotov cocktail was hurled at a bus full of passengers, as a result of which several pregnant females were seriously burned.

- - Drafted by Ted Bryan

12. (U) This report and extensive other material can be consulted on our SIPRNET site,
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
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